So, I would like to call upon the Central Government, the Home Ministry, to take up the matter immediately. It needs intervention of the Home Ministry immediately before the matter goes out of hand. Thank you.

DR. B.B. DUTTA (Nominated): Mr. Chairman, Sir, what Mr. Nongtdu has said is hundred per cent correct. In fact, we have raised this issue earlier also. Over the years there has been a steady detrioration in the law and order situation; and insurgent groups from other areas have gradually expanded up to Meghalaya. In fact, they have made Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, the Greater Shillong as their bases. They have been operating with all the intruders. I would like to say one thing, when the United Front Government was in power, the hon. Home Minister, at that time, refused to accept the position that Meghalaya was having insurgency problem. I do not know what the definition of 'insurgency' is. But we have had the same problem. Now this problem has further worsened. I want to know from the present Home Minister, the Home Ministry what view they have taken on the situation in Meghalaya, particular in Shillong and in Greater Shillong. It has become a meeting place for all the insurgent groups operating in the North-East. They come and operate here. A lot of people have been armed with weapons in Meghalaya. They don't use them quickly. They use them according to their strategy. They commit one killing to extort money. If people refuse to give money, then, they commit another killing. They commit some kidnappings. Not only the non-Tribals are affected but the tribals themselves who have families, the contractors, the businessmen are affected. I am glad that Mr. Nongtdu who had been a Home Minister in the State of Meghalaya and who had been a Minister in other departments also and who is a Member of Parliament from that State has come out with these facts. In view of what the hon. Member has stated, I hope that the Home Ministry will wake up and find out what is going on there and find a soulution. Thank You.

STATEMENT REGARDING ORDINANCE MERCHANT SHIPPING (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, 1998

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a statement (in English and Hindi) explaining the circumstances which had necessitated immediate legislation by the Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Ordinance, 1998.

[Placed in Library. *See* No. LT-722/98]

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1998

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.

[Placed in Library. *See* No. LT-773/98]

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Sir, I introduce the Bill.

STATEMENT REGARDING ORDINANCE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, 1998

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a Statement (in English and Hindi) explaining the circumstances which had necessitated immediate legislation by the Representation of the People (Amedment) Ordinance, 1998.

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1998

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Sir, I introduce the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House is adjourned till 2 o'clock.

The House then adjourned for lunch at one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at five minutes past two of the clock,

The Vice-Chairman (Shri Triloki Nath Chaturvedi) in the Chair.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKINATH CHATURVEDI): We will take up for consideration the Statutory Resolution disapproving the Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Ordinance, 1998 and the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Bill, 1997.

I. STATUTORY RESOLUTION SEEKING DISAPPROVAL OF THE EMPLOYEES' PROVIDENT FUNDS AND MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, 1998

II. THE EMPLOYEES' PROVIDENT FUNDS AND MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1997.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (WEST BENGAL): Sir, I beg to move:-

"That this House disapproves of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Ordinance, 1998 (No. 8 of 1998) promulgated by the President on the 23rd April, 1998."

Sir, I rise to raise a few questions beofore the whole issue can be discussed properly. It is good that the provident fund has been extended to the unorganised sector, and it is also good that there are some provisions that can protect the interests of the unorganised sector workers, but there are serious lapses. My point is, there are serious anomalies in the working of the provident Fund Organisation and in the implementation of the Provident Fund Act. Sir, there was a Committee appointed by the Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Labour. I happened to chair that Committee. We had suggested a number of important changes to the Government. The singularly important omission that we find is, while the default in the payment of provident fund in respect of a worker's contribution is a criminal offence, the default in respect of the payment of employer's contribution is not being considered as a criminal offence. As a result, Sir, hundreds of crores of rupees belonging to the workers of the country have not been deposited. Unfortunately I come from a State, *i.e.* West Bengal, where the default in respect of povident fund may be the highest. It is the jute industry which is in default. Taking advantage of the loopholes of the Act, the employers seek to avoid law, and since avoidance of law is found to be quite often, the victim is the working class, the working people. I know that hundreds and thousands of workers in different parts of the country have not been paid the provident fund dues even after their death and there is an accumulation, a large accumulation, in the unpaid account of the provident fund. The money is not being paid because the beneficiaries cannot be traced. On the other hand, the delinquent employers who are eating up the money of the provident fund, are not being touched. Sir, in Delhi, only some time back, I have brought to the notice of the Provident Fund Organisation, default in the payment of provident fund by the management of a number of newspapers. Complaints were lodged with the police. But they were never touched. When the matter was again brought to the notice of the Government, at the highest level, it was said that there was not enough evidence. Sir, there are serious loopholes in the Provident Fund Act, and if the Provident Fund Act is not amended, and I mean expeditiously, in that case a large number of delinquent corporate houses will be allowed to siphon off all the funds belonging to the working people, the working class, and the people who are so miserably dealt with, don't have a recourse; they don't have a remedy. Therefore, the most important issue that the hon. Minister will have to deal with—maybe, he is a new Minister, but he will have to deal with the most important problem—is the problem of avoidance of law, violation of law, in the country.

Secondly, most humbly I suggest that the provident fund organisation, the enforcement agency, is full of corrupt people. When a poor workers goes to the office of the provident fund